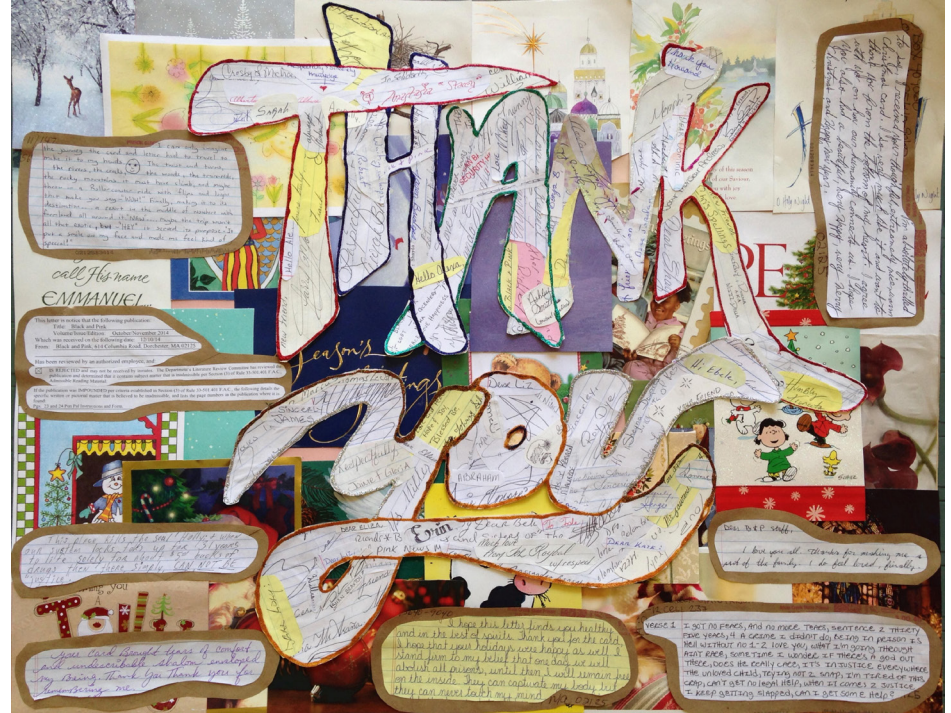
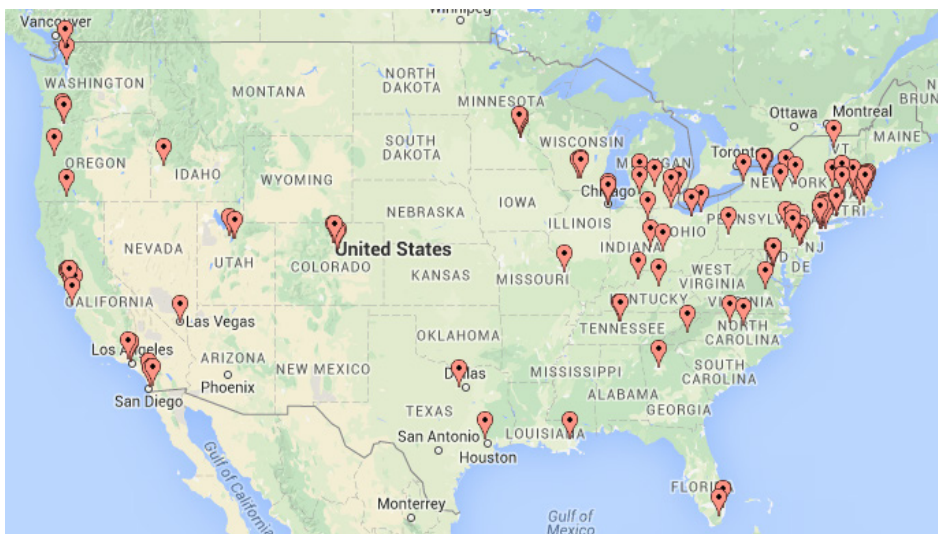




JANUARY 2015 NEWSPAPER

BLACK AND PINK HOSTS GLOBAL HOLIDAY CARD WRITING PARTIES!

Once again, Black and Pink hosted holiday card writing parties, this time with parties in Canada and Sweden, too! Over 150 card writing parties took place. Here are some photos from Winter 2014's writing parties. Also pictured are two collages from incarcerated Black and Pink members expressing their thanks!



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SEND US YOUR ART!

This month's header is by John in Indiana! Have your art featured in the Newspaper! We'll feature a different artist each month! Send us a drawing that says, "Black & Pink" or "Black and Pink" or "Poetry from the Heart" for the headers! Header art should be around the size of the newspaper header! Smaller or larger images may be resized to fit. You can send us other art too and we will include it in the poetry page.

WHAT’S INSIDE

Page 2
A Message from Jason
Black and Pink Newspaper Editing Guidelines
Page 3, 4, and 5
Letters to Our Family
Page 6
13 Things We Re-Learned About the Prison Industrial Complex
Page 7
13 Things We Re-Learned About the Prison Industrial Complex Cont.
Nine LGBTQ Stories Big Media Ignored in 2014
Page 8
Nine LGBTQ Stories Big Media Ignored in 2014 Cont
There is No Such Thing as Prison Reform: An Interview with CeCe McDonald
Page 9
There is No Such Thing as Prison Reform: An Interview with CeCe McDonald Cont
On the Inside Has Concluded Collecting Art Work Marriage Will Never Set us Free
Black and Pink Hotline Number!!!
Black and Pink Family Feedback
Page 10
There is No Such Thing as Prison Reform: An Interview with CeCe McDonald Cont
For Solitary Confinement in US Prisons, A Yea of Incremental Reform
Prisons are Destroying Communities and Making All of us Less Safe
Page 11
Poetry from the Heart
Page 12
Prisons are Destroying Communities and Making All of us Less Safe Cont
Addresses

Statement of Purpose
Black & Pink is an open family of LGBTQ prisoners and “free world” allies who support each other. Our work toward the abolition of the prison industrial complex is rooted in the experience of currently and formerly incarcerated people. We are outraged by the specific violence of the prison industrial complex against LGBTQ people, and respond through advocacy, education, direct service, and organizing.

Black & Pink is proudly a family of people of all races.

About this Newspaper
Since 2007, Black & Pink free world volunteers have pulled together a monthly newspaper primarily composed of material written by our family’s incarcerated members. In response to letters we receive, more prisoners receive the newspaper each issue!

This month, the newspaper is being sent to: 7,252 prisoners!

Disclaimer:
Please note that the ideas and opinions expressed in the Black & Pink Newspaper are solely those of the authors and artists and do not necessarily reflect the views of Black & Pink. Black & Pink makes no representations as to the accuracy of any statements made in the Newspaper, including but not limited to legal and medical information. Authors and artists bear sole responsibility for their work. Everything published in the Newspaper is also on the internet—it can be seen by anyone with a computer. By sending a letter to “Newspaper Submissions,” you are agreeing to have your piece in the Newspaper and on the internet. For this reason, we only publish First Names and State Location to respect people’s privacy. Pieces may be edited to fit our anti-oppression values and based on our Editing Guidelines.

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS TO HOT PINK!
Seeking erotic short stories, poems, AND ART by Black & Pink incarcerated and free-world family members for a new ‘zine. To be mailed, art cannot include full nudity. Please send submissions (and shout outs to the authors from the first issue mailed in January!) addressed to Black & Pink - HOT PINK. This is a voluntary project, and no money will be offered for submissions, but you might get the chance to share your spicy story with many others! The zine will be sent 1-2 times per year. To subscribe to receive a copy of HOT PINK twice a year, write to our address, Black & Pink - GENERAL.

A MESSAGE FROM JASON

Dear friends,
I hope this note finds you as well as possible. I know that the beginning of the new year brings hope for some but also a sense of hopelessness for others. As the calendar turns it means that some folks are getting closer to their wrap date while for others it can be a reminder that there is no counting the days of a life sentence. I write these words not to make anyone feel bad or worse, but to remind us all that Black and Pink is open to serving all LGBTQ prisoners, no matter who they are. This means that we need to be gentle with each other. This means that we need to look out for each other. Even if you are not one to make resolutions for the new year, I ask that you consider making a promise to yourself, promise to read and hear the stories of Black and Pink members who are different from you and think about ways we can create a world where no one is held in a cage.

How much of the news have you been able to see lately? Have you heard about the protests growing all across the United States? Have you heard that many are making the connections between policing and incarceration? Have you heard that people are shutting down highways, police stations, and even fancy-pants white brunch places? People have been rising up proclaiming loud and clear, BLACK LIVES MATTER! In a country that locks up more Black people than under South African apartheid, this is a radical vision. In a country where a Black person is killed every 28 hours by a cop, security guard, or vigilante, it is clear that the mainstream does not believe Black lives matter. By rallying around a vision that Black lives matter we are able to imagine a radically different country and world. What would it look like to bring this vision into the prison where you are held?

In an interview with Feminist Wire, Patrisse Cullors, who is one of the co-visionaries behind #BlackLivesMatters, shared some of what she hoped to see in ten years. She said, “In ten years, I’d like to see some law enforcement agencies be disbanded or abolished, as well the development of a national network of families and victims working together in tandem, pushing for reform in their own cities. Either getting rid of police departments or having some serious checks and balances. With a reduction of law enforcement money, we can then be putting it back into Black communities. We need a new vision for jobs for Black folks, housing, healthy food.” Prisoner voices are KEY in this vision. Prisoner voices MUST be included in this vision. People have taken protests outside of jails, rallying and holding fists up in solidarity with prisoners. However, we have not done well enough of printing the words of prisoners who are sharing their own vision. This paper is supposed to be a place where we share the words of Black and Pink members to impact and support not only other prisoners, but also to help shape the work of those of us in the “free world.” When you think of what to write for the paper can you imagine that nearly 10,000 people read those words? You are powerful. Your voice can impact so many others. What is your ten year vision for the world, even knowing that the concrete and steel around you wants to crush your vision, what can you imagine?

George Jackson was a revolutionary Black prisoner who was killed by prison guards in San Quentin, California on August 21, 1971. Prior to his death Jackson wrote books and pushed the movement to listen to the voices of prisoners. In his book, Soledad Brother, he wrote something then that I think you might appreciate today, over 40 years later. “Prisoners are completely ostracized from society,” he wrote, “with little or no chance to break through. Those few outside who might be sympathetic are always hesitant to communicate or protest past a certain point, fearing their own persecution or imprisonment. Also, deep down most people believe that all prisoners, regardless of their individual situations, really did do something ‘wrong.’ Added to that prejudice, society lacks a distinction between a prisoner’s actions and his or her personal worth; a bad act equals a bad person. The bottom line is that the majority of people simply will not believe that the state openly or covertly oppresses without criminal cause.” We are fighting this commonly held belief every day. In 2015 let us continue to strengthen our movement knowing that once there were

no prisons, that day will come again.
In loving solidarity,
Jason

BLACK AND PINK NEWSPAPER EDITING GUIDELINES

We would prefer to make edits to a piece and then send it back to the author for approval of our edits before publishing. However, this would create a time delay, increased work, and lost pieces due to lost mail, making it more difficult to publish monthly. Instead, we try to make minimal changes to submissions before publishing. We don’t publish all pieces, sometimes because of space, sometimes because a piece may not be a good fit. Whoever types up a piece may do editing within our guidelines, and the Newspaper Committee and Leadership Circle may continue editing.

Values/Politics Edits: We may change some words or remove some sentences that don’t fit our anti-oppression values, without changing the author’s main points. We may make an “Editor’s Note” to add information or a point of view.
Prioritizing: We focus on submissions that deal with being LGBTQ, being in prison, and resistance, survival, and activism. We highlight voices from marginalized identities. We also focus on pieces that strengthen the Family, and further the values and goals of B&P.
Length: For each piece we like about 500 words or less, typed or handwritten. We can sometimes put longer pieces in two newspapers. We may use sections of a piece if it’s too long.
Content from Inside/Outside: Submissions from people in prison should be at least 50% of the Newspaper. Other content may be B&P organization reports and updates, Free World articles and news.
Spelling/Grammar/Structure: We often correct spelling, and change some grammar while trying to leave the author’s voice intact. We may change the structure of a piece to make it easier to read.
All volunteer: We don’t pay for submissions, though we do not charge money for sending the Newspaper to people in prison. Free World volunteers are not paid for work on the Newspaper.
Direct responses: People love responding directly to other Newspaper contributors. It is a nice way to build the family, but there are so many of us we all can’t do it, and it risks more Newspaper rejections for “inmate-to-inmate communication.” We ask that authors address the whole family, rather than individuals. We may edit a piece to be a response to the content of another piece, rather than to one individual.
Names of prisons, staff, other inmates: We have been removing references to the names of other people in prison, for their confidentiality. We have been removing the specific name of the prison people reference, to maintain their confidentiality. We have at times withheld the names of staff referenced in a piece, when it is not clear that the author is intending to create a confrontation that may include retaliation.
Printing Full Names/addresses: People often sign their full name and/or request the printing of their full name/address with their piece. We have been only printing first names and states. We do this to provide some confidentiality. We aren’t getting as full a consent to publish as would be ideal- people don’t always know or understand what it means to have their piece published on the internet, so they may not understand that they are searchable and ‘out’ to everyone with an internet connection. Also, this helps avoid “promoting inmate to inmate communication,” which gets the newspaper banned from some prisons.
Desperation and Hope: Prison is intense. The mood of pieces ranges from suicidal to bliss. We aim for including a balance of upbeat and despairing submissions.
Relationship advice: Some people write in asking for or giving relationship advice. We more often print personal and general thoughts and reflections on relationships, and usually do not print requests or advice about what individual people should do in specific situations.
Swears: We take out some swear words to prevent Newspaper rejection, while trying to keep the tone/message of the author.
“Gangs”: We remove mention of specific gangs to avoid censorship by prisons, but keep stories people tell about experiences with “gangs” or other term used by people who write
Requests for money: We have not published requests for money.
Regular columnists: A few people have requested regular columns we have not done this yet. We would need to consider if the guidelines for control of editing are the same.

Hello Family,

It sure seems like when I sit down to write each of y’all at Black & Pink a certain weight lifts from my shoulders. I’m pretty sure it’s because you seem to help me carry this load. Thank you!

Now Billy does have something to say. First, great job! Fantastic! When I opened my latest issue of Black & Pink, and read all the family member’s participation I swelled with pride. Your voices are my daily strength and I thank you each one for your love and courage. I also thank the one who updated my address, so cool!

Now, since coming to this new unit, I’ve actually come into contact with my own community. My last unit there were only four of us and we rarely spoke. However, since coming here I was asked a question that just stopped me in my tracks. “Billy, what does Black and Pink stand for?” When I advised them of our mission statement I was corrected and they said, “No, what does the Black and Pink stand for?” Well for someone like myself who prides himself on “knowing it all” Lol, I was terrified. Here’s what I found: “In WWII all groups of prisoners in the concentration camps had to wear external markings, Black for anti-socials (as I’ve been called a couple times, simply because I don’t agree with the “norm”), and pink for homosexuals.”

Ok, folks, another brief history lesson; while in the Chowline a community member came and asked me what “Stonewall” was. I had asked him earlier in the week to have others write our chaplain’s department and request “The Stonewall uprising, documentary,” I hit a stone wall, I couldn’t believe my ears but when I got back to my cell two things occurred to me 1) I had an advantage growing up when it came to the L/G/B/T/Q history, be it a sad one, I still had one. 2) I realized that people including myself tend to under-appreciate what they have. We don’t give it much thought until we lose it. Those brave souls at the Stonewall Inn that night in 1969 stood up to the police brutality and said “No more!!” and were the start to our community’s movement. And also the reason we have parades in June each year. This is a very brief explanation. I do recommend you all watch this documentary at least once.

Those who are intolerant of the LGBTQ community are in part because of what they have been taught or the stories they have been told about us. From the time I was a kid I knew I was different, I thought that people like me were bad, that we were going to hell, and I believed such bigotry and hated myself for many years.

Once my eyes were opened, thanks to movements such as Black & Pink and many others on the front line, I was shown that those very haters were passing judgment against us not because of what they themselves believe but rather what they have been taught or forced to behave. This on the surface then suggests they are looking in the mirror through the eyes of someone else’s beliefs.

There is no need to fear or care what people who disagree think. They are unimportant because if they don’t care “any” thing about your happiness why should you or I care what their opinion is. I speak from experience, “why should I give anyone that type of power over me.”

When it comes to your individual identity you deserve to be you and you deserve the “Right” to feel comfortable and “Safe” being your true self. I promise you are not alone, despite what the conformist crowd may suggest and want you to believe. Especially the prison system in which we are being kept. We behind these walls are not sick or any different from the rest of those within the LGBTQ community. You’re not going to die or go to hell because you enjoy being with someone of the same gender. We’re not crazy or deviants like the prison system tries to suggest and writes in our medical records or travel cards.

This is just a form of trying to separate and exclude us from the rest of “normalcy!” By doing so they say, they have an excuse to deny our rights.

Please just look while reading your next issue of Black & Pink and you’ll see. I will say it over and over “You are not alone!” I for one am praying for every member of my family and the movement known as Black & Pink.

So even when it seems like the darkness surrounds you and there’s no one there to turn on the light or hold you and tell you its okay to feel as you feel, know this, pick up a copy of your Black & Pink, like I have so many times in my growth, and there you will find stories just like your own. Also there’ll be a direction on which way to go. We will comfort each other, lift one another and empower those who feel powerless. You will learn that “Yes, even in prison it’s all right to be Lesbian, Gay, Bi, or Trans.”

Ok, before you say it, I am fully aware and wholly understand that this can be easier said than done, but I believe in “YOU” because I believe in me. Also be mindful of the truth, no one and I mean no one has the right to rob you of who you are. Rejection only matters when you yourself allow it to



Sylvia Rivera (holding the banner) and Marsha P. Johnson (left center) of the Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries (S.T.A.R.) at the Christopher Street Liberation Day City Pride Parade, NYC (24 June 1973). Photographed Leonard Smith. Reprinted by permission from National Museum, the home of the Endless Fire Memorial to Stonewall Community Center

Marsha P. Johnson & Sylvia Rivera, veterans of the Stonewall Rebellion and founders of S.T.A.R. (Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries), at the Christopher Street Liberation Day, Gay Pride Parade, NYC, June 24, 1973.

define who you are or wish to be, as I did. I’ve learned; people who reject you simply because you are of the LGBTQ community do so as proof that they never deserved to be part of your life in the first place.

You are too special a person to fill your life full of hateful individuals who have nothing better to do than put people down. “Misery loves Company.” We’ve all heard it before, but since opening my eyes, I see it!

There is a reason they call your body yours but as much as it can be said to that, what makes you far more beautiful and worthy is unlike those seeking to change, reject, or outcast you for who you are; you have the heart and compassion to share your human desires with others so that they “Do Know” they are not alone. Just as each of you let me know when I read my issues.

While some of you who are incarcerated may not believe so, I want you to know that true love and or friendship “Does Exist” amongst our incarcerated peers. Black & Pink now for as long as I’ve been a family member has turned Billy into the man he can live with. A proud, open, gay man who stands firmly on the principles of communication, trust, love, and loyalty. Truth and faithfulness to each other, I believe being the key that holds our community together for those to come behind us.

Reach out, write-in, someone needs your hand, or reach out and write about your problems and see what your true peers do.

As long as our family members on the outside and inside try to better our conditions I will do my part to help as well. Without your voice our LGBTQ community in prison cannot be heard so write-in and let our voices break through the walls of our social and emotional incarceration.

As always, til the Toe Tags- Billy loves and supports you!
Peace,
Billy, Texas

Dear Black and Pink Family,
Hello, my name is Shaylanna but most of my family calls me Dee. I usually don’t write “Dear Family” letters but I’m starting to see way too much shit that needs to be heard. In the facility I’m in there’s LGBT people who want to be themselves but are afraid they will be messed with. These same people came up to me and ask questions like, “Aren’t you worried about being a target?”, “How do you do it”, “Why don’t you stick by yourself?” etc.

First, I keep my eyes open for people who try to victimize me or the other open LGBT people, and second who cares what the next f***-head thinks or says about me as long as they don’t touch me.

Growing up, I got pretty good at being a boy. But a boy wasn’t an identity that I could live with. Boy wasn’t how I wanted to be treated, and boy was never how I wanted to act. Boy never allowed me to truly express myself. Every

waking moment that I walked through the world as a boy and man made me feel like a liar and a phony. But after I went through my “teenage crisis,” I found myself still living a life of working hard at being, only now I was working hard at being a “girl.” Nothing in the paradigm of my life allowed for being neither. And the more I tried to be boy or girl, the less I seemed to measure up to “either” and the less I wanted to stay alive. It finally got to the point where it just didn’t seem worth it anymore. It came down to two questions : Should I kill myself or should I make myself a life worth living? And it wasn’t so much the question that kept me alive or even my answer. What kept me alive was the notion that it was me who was asking the question.

So, to all my LGBT family members who think it’s hard to come out and be yourselves, hard to become a target, or had to just stick to yourself, I want you to ask yourselves the same questions I did. And remember, if you chose to stay closed in, you can always chose to come out and make yourself a life worth living, you may be so much more happier. The weight on your back can be lifted.

My message here is: Be who you are, not who society wants you to be.
Love your sister,
Shaylanna Luvme

Black & Pink,

I want to congratulate you all on the newspaper. I love it, through our newsletter I’ve received much knowledge and a tremendous amounts of comfort, knowing I am not alone. I say that in relation to my current situation, I am in a Texas prison, with many years done and many years to go. The Texas system is bad, the discrimination towards LGBT is bluntly visible. My life has changed since I was a little boy, growing up in south Texas. And as a grown man, I have found love, strength, and comfort in the LGBT society, I know this is where I belong, and care not what the haters think, with that I send much love and respect out to each and every one of you, I extend our Rainbow Pride.

The abuse and humiliation towards the gay lifestyle here in prison is everywhere, it comes from the lowest of inmate population, all the way to the warden. And no one does anything about it, it is just left as is. And so I feel the significance to tell my story,

This story is about my dear friend Marcus (A.K.A. Diamond) who has

shared his life and taught me so much, it was magic, and he said, all you have to do is “believe.” We were together in here for 3 years almost inseparable, we were the dream team. At one point we lived in the same cell together, and it became very clear that we were a couple, and if they did not know, we were happy to let it be known.

The officers, and administration, began to harass, at every turn. If we were seen together going to Chow, a officer would pull one of us out of the line, and send the other one down the hall-way. In the beginning it was minor harassment, and really petty, but gradually it became worse, our cells were being shook down, the officers were trying to “out us.” We would receive disciplinary cases, for nothing like walking a “yellow line,” “out of place,” just so the administration could give us “cell-restriction.” Meaning, we could not leave our cells, so at the same time it would separate us, They would do anything to cause us turmoil, it got to the point, that face to face, we were tormented.

Then one day Diamond (Marcus) received a new cell-mate, a wormy non-threatening little dude. Anyway, this new cell-mate was struggling, and one day he began to cut on himself in the Cell, Diamond called the officers, and the inmate was taken to the infirmary, where he was given medical attention. Diamond told the captain, and rank, the cell-mate had stated he was suicidal, hearing voices, and even threatening to cut Diamond.

The standard procedure in any situation involving cutters or suicidal incident, the offender is to be placed in seclusion or transferred to a mental hospital to be seen by a doctor but he is NOT suppose to be placed back in his cell, especially in A cell, when he had already threaten to cut his cell-mate. If he is going to cut himself, he could cut someone else. Well Marcus told the captain, he was not living in that cell with him, not after he had threatened him, but they were not following procedures, and the captain placed him in the cell anyway. But when the cell door opened up, Marcus ran out of the cell, to get away from the inmate. All the officers body-slammed Diamond, all 135 lbs of him. He was placed in solitary. The extent of the harassment and abuse, as well as not being fed was breaking Diamond down. He attempted suicide twice, and was placed in administration segregation, I wrote him long letters everyday trying to let him know, forever is forever, all you have to do is believe.

It became too much for him, he was breaking down, so I got myself in trouble, so I would be placed in segregation and be closer to him, at least we could talk and see one another. So when I went to classification the warden told me he knew I was trying to go to seg to follow Diamond, he said “The only thing I want to know is why you are even messing with a black punk.” I let him have it. I cussed him, and let him know he is not anybody and puts his pants on, one leg at a time, just like everyone else.

In Ad. Seg. I was not fed, lunch or supper, for the first two days. I received nothing except the boxers I had on, no mattress, no nothing, I was run in on, I had my eye swollen shut. But from that point, seg is so small, even if they separated us, they were unable to keep us from communicating.

One year ago, early in the morning, Marcus called to the officers, who were working the Pod, and told them he was hearing voices and feeling suicidal. They blew him off. In 15 to 20 minutes when they came around again, he told them again, he was tripping and crying. A third time, he asked to speak to the psych or the rank, they paid no attention to him. Thirty minutes later when the officer did his security checks, they found Marcus hanging, and he was dead. The officers tried to concoct a story to cover for themselves, but 13 other inmates witnessed the whole thing.

He is greatly missed, by me, as well as his mother and family. His mom and me communicate a couple times a month. She is a sweetheart. Just hearing from her helps me beyond words. This is not a solo-incident, I have witnessed it 5 times over the last year and a half. The Texas prison system is the biggest joke in the world. I do not know if anything can be done, in Diamond’s situation, but I wrote his mom and I owe it to Marcus, to tell his story. He is the reason I receive the Black & Pink Newspaper.

And it is ironic, to find myself writing you. And on top of that, I received the B&P Newspaper at the same time I’m writing you all. I would like to say thank you, for your time, and for all the help Black & Pink does for all of us, it enables us to reach out and talk to others and we are able to see, there are others and we are not alone. Yes, we are in prison, paying a debt to society, as punishment, but we should not have to be punished for our sexual preference. I’ve been reading in the News. I believe in the near future, society will have to acknowledge our civil rights, but in the mean time, we know who we are and love we share for all of us. I just felt compelled to write and express myself to everyone, to pray for Marcus’s mom, and to remember Marcus- you taught me magic, and to believe, and I do, I love you.

Conn, Texas

Dear Black and Pink,

My name is Thomas, an inmate in Pennsylvania. I want to thank you for your wonderful newspaper. I received it yesterday morning when I was feeling especially down. Your newspaper brought me joy and hope! I know now that I am not alone. I have a huge family out there that loves me and supports me 100%. I have a very strong positive message to share with my brothers and sisters out there in the prison system- especially level 5 Secure Housing Units.

First of all, I’d like to respond to the article written to Brother Chris from Indiana (April 2014). Brother, we have something in common! I too was

molested and raped- me by my Aunt. I was five when the abuse started and went on until I was eight years old. My Aunt had the most contact with me than any other person in my family. She forced me to be sexual with her on an almost daily basis. At age seven, I told a teacher at school what was going on. She called Children and Adult services and State Police and reported. My Aunt was charged and put in jail. I went through ruthless questioning from CYS and police who should have been helping, but their questions further damaged my delicate and fragile mind. Finally before trial, my family threatened and beat me, forcing me to tell the courts I lied and made it all up. I did so and charges were dropped. Considering I was a juvenile then, only 14 or 15, the court records were sealed and are sealed to this day. My aunt, because of this was able to abuse and rape several other children and this time also got away with it because my family was tight and best friends forever with several high ranking CYS officials. A few years later she had a son. When he was 6, I sexually abused him. This only happened once, but I know what I did caused him severe damage and confusion. To my knowledge, he never told anyone. My guilt and shame is severe. It has caused me severe anger issues and major depression and anxiety. These emotions are what led me to my crimes. Brother Chris, you are NOT ALONE. I wrote the Indiana County District Court today. (My crimes against this poor kid happened in Indiana County, PA). I made my confession. Michael is now 16 or 17. It’s time he gets the justice he needs.

Another issue that I feel that NEEDS to be printed in our newspaper, this goes out to all people in Level 5 Security Housing Units. This system is designed to break us! I am housed in the RHU. All of the inmates spend all day and night, fighting and bickering amongst each other. They call each other degrading, mean, nasty names. They call it “bidding” and “grinding” people up. No one seems to want to take a stand against this system that is oppressing us. I have been guilty of this too, probably more than most! But I had a wake up call a couple of nights ago. I AM going to stand up! The proper way to do this is PAPERWORK- exhausting the grievance system, lawsuits, writing prison advocacy programs and studying in the law library. This is the only way we can do this. I realize the above happens in every L5 Housing Unit. We NEED to put all our prejudice, hatred and animosity we have toward each other and FIGHT THE SYSTEM!

We are spending ALL our energy in fighting each other! If we do this, than we will have NO focus or energy to fight this oppressive system. We NEED TO UNITE if only for the time it takes to change this oppressive system designed to break us! There is hope at the end of the tunnel- ONLY if we UNITE and STAND TOGETHER. Now is the time to act! There is an old saying, which I live by- If not ME, who? If not NOW, when? It is time, FAMILY, to take our stand! I love you ALL.

Love Always,
Thomas, Pennsylvania

Dear B&P Fam,

Hello and how is everyone doing? My name is Brian but everyone calls me CB. I’m currently locked up in Illinois right now. Anyways I just want to unload some things on everyone. To start I’m in a lovely and happy relationship with a transwoman named Elena and we are very open about it to everyone everywhere we go. My point is I’ve seen some couples where I’m at here who are scared to show who they with ‘cause people judge. And I just wanted to say just be yall’s selves cause no one can tell you how to live your life so enjoy it to the fullest and be proud of who you are and who you with. Forget what a hater say about it. Always keep it real with who you with and who you are as a person and never think less about it. ‘Cause if a person is so worried about what you are doing or who you are doing it with and can’t focus on themselves (and I’m talking about them heterosexual people), it means you are doing something right! Me and Elena go through verbal abuse and get threatened daily by these guys and we call they bluff. They don’t do nothin’. They talk about throwin’ poop and pee at us (lol). Well guess what me and Elena still do us and don’t pay no one no mind. We hold hands, hug, and show our love to each other daily, can’t no one dictate our pace of our lives, so I hope none of yall let anyone either. Everyone keep your heads up and stay strong cause united we stand divided we fall. God bless this family.

Truly,
Brian aka CB, Illinois

Dear Black and Pink,

Hello my family, how are we doing. Well I wanted to write to you all and tell you, I got my last newsletter and I was very unhappy, we need some more letters in the newsletter.

I want to tell you all something from the heart. I am a gay single white male that’s 32 years old doing 25 years. I have been down for 5 years, and I have been robbed and everything else. I just keep moving on and keeping my head up. I don’t let these jerks in prison ruin my life or let that bullshit get in my head, I keep doing what I do everyday. But for real I have moved to a new unit and I am in a new hope therapeutic community, it’s a unit that helps you with problems you might have if its with drugs or anger or anything else, and this program has really brought a lot of life into me, and I don’t let things get to me anymore and I am a different person, so I want to help people or tell them things are going to be OK.

But what I want to help most of all is help our gay youth and gay teens. I think no one is putting in the energy about trying to help the bullied youth or gay teens out there in the world. I was bullied as a teen for not just

being gay but for other things, and we need to help stop it. But anyway I also know there is a lot of gay and bullied people in the prison. But let’s stop and think about all the youth out there that no one is talking about. I have things I would like to see change.

But there is one thing I miss in my life, that is someone in my life. I would love to have someone to love on. I guess you could say I am more of a queen. But I love all my gay family GLBTQ and my gay youth and teens, their in our family and we have to support them.

You all take care. Lots of love xoxo
Dakota,VA

Dear Black and Pink,

I’ve got some info for your readers. There’s this magazine company that gives free one year subscriptions to prisoners in the United States and offers magazine subscriptions at a discount. All you have to do is send a SASE (self-addressed stamped envelope) and ask for the free magazine list-- they’ll send you everything you need. The company is: Inmate Magazine Services Inc, PO Box 2063, Ft. Walton Beach, FL 32549. They also enter you in a \$100 drawing quarterly.

There’s another magazine company that accepts stamps as payment. You can get up to four 1 year subscriptions (using bonus coupons they will send you) for 20, yes 20, stamps! Send them a SASE asking for their “Yellow Sheet stamp supersale” order form and use the coupons that come with it. The company name is: Tightwad Magazines, PO Box 1941, Buford, GA 30515.

The last address I have for everyone is for a national resource guide that covers just about everything. It’s 24 pages and free. The address is PARC, PO Box 70477, Oakland, CA 94612. Just write and ask for the 24 page resource guide then wait for it.

I’ve used all three of these addresses and have been very satisfied with the services. Hope these prove helpful to everyone. It’s always great to get mags in the mail! :)

Stay strong. Stay true to your beliefs.
In solidarity,
Jery, Florida

Dear Black & Pink,

I’ve been getting Black & Pink for about a year now and thought I would write you a letter. I’ve been in lock-up in Texas now for 16 years. When I first got to my unit, I was not Out because of what I have seen happen to “out” people. They are beat up and/or raped. They’re made to “ride” and sell their body because their “man” tells them to. It upsets me to see this happen. When after a few years there, I told a friend of mine I was gay, I was told by a group of people that I was going to “ride” with them. When I told them “no,” I was going to do what I want and no one will run my life, I had some fights. But as time went by people started to see me for who I am, not just because I was gay. I’ve made some good friends in the time I’ve been here.

I hope and pray that I’m at the end of my time. But if not, I will have 4 more years left then I’m done, they will have to let me go. Then I can start my life over. It’s been hard sometimes in here because you are gay. People will hate just because of that. But don’t let it ruin your day, no matter what others say or do to you, you still have control in your life. Remember all the good times and friends you had. Like Ray. We were together in the same unit. We have done good time and great talks. People like him make doing time easier. But our time together was short lived. He is now back in another unit. He will most likely finish his time out right. I pray for him and thank him for being a good friend when I needed one. There have been others through time who have made life fun to live.

So if you have friends who have moved on (home or to other units) just remember all the time you shared with each other. If you see someone who is having a bad day or looks lonely, try to be friends with them. You never know who you may meet this way. Remember life is for us to love each other and to have fun. Pray for everyone, family or not. Love others as you would want to be loved. Thank you Black & Pink for all the hard work you do to get us your newspaper.

Blessed and loved
John, Texas

Dear Black and Pink Family,

I’ve been working on this letter for months, but it’s unfortunate that I am in the Hole again, so now my mind is in a jumble.

This is my first letter in the newspaper, I pray there may be more to come. July last year (2013) was the first time I’ve heard & read of Black & Pink. But the stories of the suffering my brothers & sisters go through, it pisses me off & know that I feel your pain. Been there & still going through it. But this is the first time that I’m having my own sexuality be used against me.

My name is Angel, I turned 26 in April. And I am proud to be a bisexual male who is a marvelous & beautiful Queen. Before my incarceration in 2008, I was just a bisexual man (boy). During my lock-up, I finally realized I was meant to be a Queen. A Queen who is Latin@ at 6’ & 154 lbs, I was born to be the person I am today.

Haven’t filed a Section 1983, yet, but after what this Assistant Warden is doing to me, this woman has crossed the line with me, and I just might file the 1983 against her & the whole NDOC. The past April they decided to share with us “inmates” about PREA, & I’ve seen that it has helped those speak up

about being sexually assaulted & harassed by staff at this particular corrupted institution from both “straight” & LGBTQ individuals. I personally thank Just Detention International for providing the material, but... NDOC is using it against us. A particular person, a friend of mine, is being labeled & harassed personally by said Assistant Warden just because he wanted to ask to live with someone only because he’s helping him overturn his case. The Asst. Warden denied it because of the huge difference & saw him (my friend) as a potential sexual perpetrator. My friend asked our unit officers for help in saying that’s not the case & he got written up for a MJ-51: Compromising Staff (120 days Hole-time).

I’m barely coming to understand what the P.I.C. is, what we- the LGBTQ- as a whole are doing to put a stop to it. It makes me upset because being in the position that I’m in, I can only do so much. But sometimes my voice & concerns fall on deaf ears. I’m too ashamed to say what I’m in prison for, being the first person in my family to be detained by the NDOC is bad enough on its own but I was convicted of a B Felony for 4 ½ to 15 years with almost 6 years in this coming September. I was denied for 3 years at my first chance of Parole, so now it looks like I will be expiring my sentence—8 years, give or take. That means I will be going home towards the end of 2016. That also means I got 2 more years to put up with these ignorant, self-centered people who work for the great Nevada Department of “Corruption”.

In closing, I wish to say to all my Brothers & Sisters, that whatever you claim to be do not ever let anyone take away your identity, your happiness, & your hope. Know that you are beautiful, inside & out. Also know that you got a worldwide family who loves you dearly & unconditionally. A lot of us may not know each other personally, but as long as we are part of the LGBTQ community- we are a strong, compassionate, loving family. No matter what, we will love & support one another.

Also, allow me to give a big shout-out to the following people: O & Mookie, Diamond & Moody, K, my husband Chris, Paulie, Raven, Pebbles, Poor Boy, Drifter, Arbert, CJ, Hoss & Silent. My two sisters, D & Diamond—I love you both very much. I don’t know what I’d do without you. Let’s “Think Today for a Pink Tomorrow.”

Again, this is Angel, & I’m telling you that each & every one of you reading this has one by your side, to light & guide your path, & who is always guarding you from harm. Take care of yourself & those around you. I love you all with all of my heart & soul. I can only pray that I may receive the blessed chance to see & talk to some of you personally; especially our LC in Massachusetts. Let us not ever give up.

In Solidarity, Peace, & Love,
Miss Angel in Nevada

Dear Brothers and Sisters of the Black & Pink Family,

First of all I wish to thank everyone at Black & Pink for providing the LGBTQ both on the streets and in prison with a newspaper to stay connected. I enjoy every issue I’ve received, I fully understand all the hassles and troubles LGBTQ inmates go through, and my heart goes out to all of you.

My name is Don, I’m a gay white male who’s 54 years old, and it wasn’t until I was 49 that I came out to a select few people, none of which were family. It wasn’t until the age of 12 that a friend at school showed me things to help show me who I really was. I can’t thank this friend enough for opening my eyes. It was real easy to hide the fact that I’m gay from family and friends. I grew up in a really, really small town, and everyone knows what everyone else is doing.

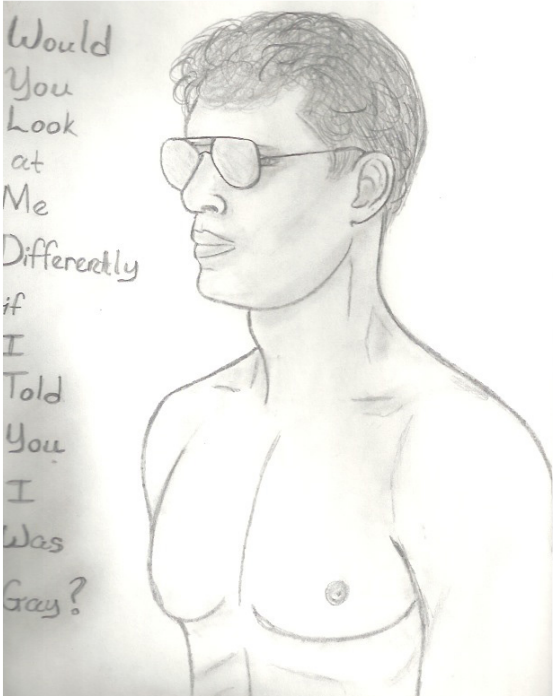
In 2009, I received a 12 year sentence so I decided to finally come out, even to my family. Coming out in a federal SOMP (Sex Offender Management Program) yard was a big mistake. Members of the psychology department have called me disgusting for being gay, the pictures of men I had are disgusting, even though straight inmates can have the same type of pictures, and because I’m gay, I live a deviant sexual lifestyle. The psychologists also believe they can change you from being gay to straight since it’s just a choice we make.

Then for all the people out there that believe we get great medical care, here’s something for you to think about. On May 15, 2014, I was told by the head doctor at the prison that my kidneys are failing. He ruled out the two main causes, but instead of setting up tests to find out why, he set me up to check my blood next year. My kidneys can completely fail by that time. This is the great medical attention inmates receive, according to the public.

Thank you once again for providing this great newspaper and to all my brothers and sisters, take care of yourselves and keep your heads up.

Don, CO

Art: Would You... by Jenni M

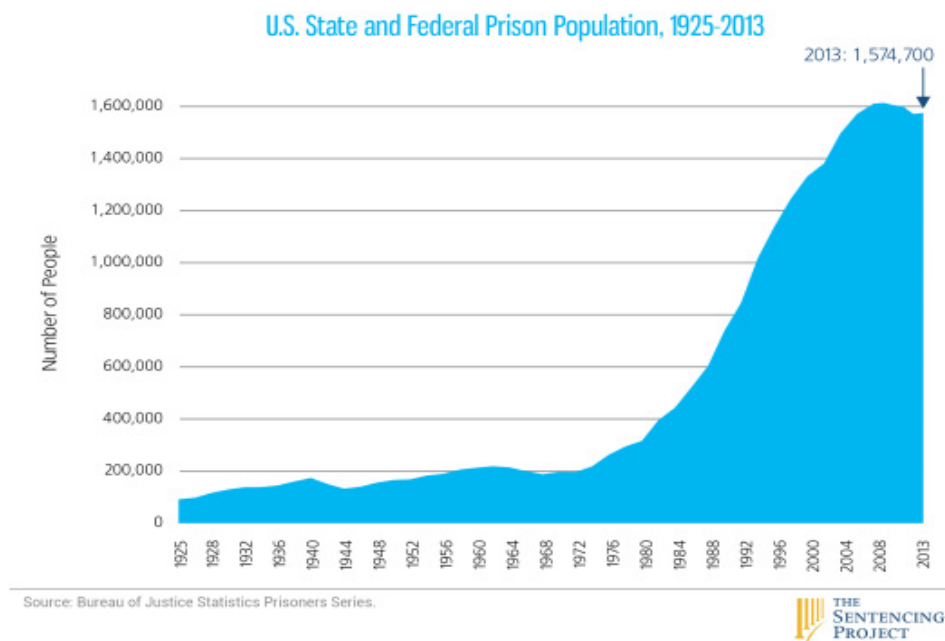


13 THINGS THAT WE RE-LEARNED ABOUT THE PRISON INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX IN 2014

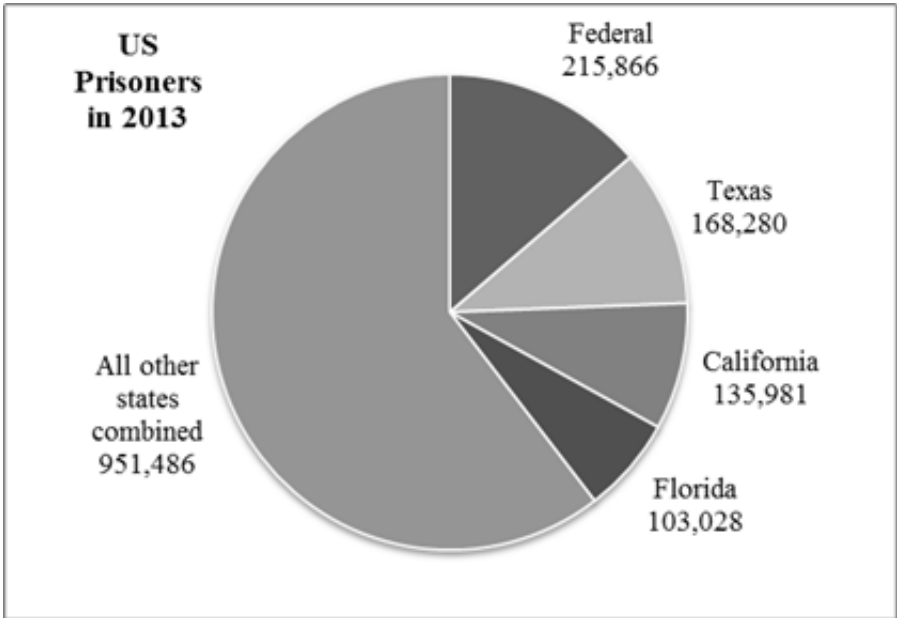
Last year, I offered a year-end list of key developments in the PIC. People seemed to appreciate the recap so I produced a 2014 version. As was true last year, there are many developments that didn’t make the list including the report by the National Research Council that analyzed the exponential growth of U.S. incarceration, the announcement that New York City will end punitive solitary confinement for juveniles, the continued criminalization of motherhood (especially black mothers), the ongoing criminalization of LGBTQ people, multiple botched executions, the indictment of Christopher Epps, Mississippi’s corrections commissioner for corruption, and more.

We are STILL in the era of “mass” & “hyper” incarceration.

1. In 2014, we learned that state prison populations actually increased last year. In 2013, the prison population was 1,574,741, an increase of about 4,300 over



the previous year, but below its high of 1,615,487 in 2009. This was the first increase in state prison population in four years. The prison population in New Hampshire grew faster than any other state. The state’s 8.2% increase topped second-place Nebraska’s 6.8% rise and far outstripped the 0.3% national

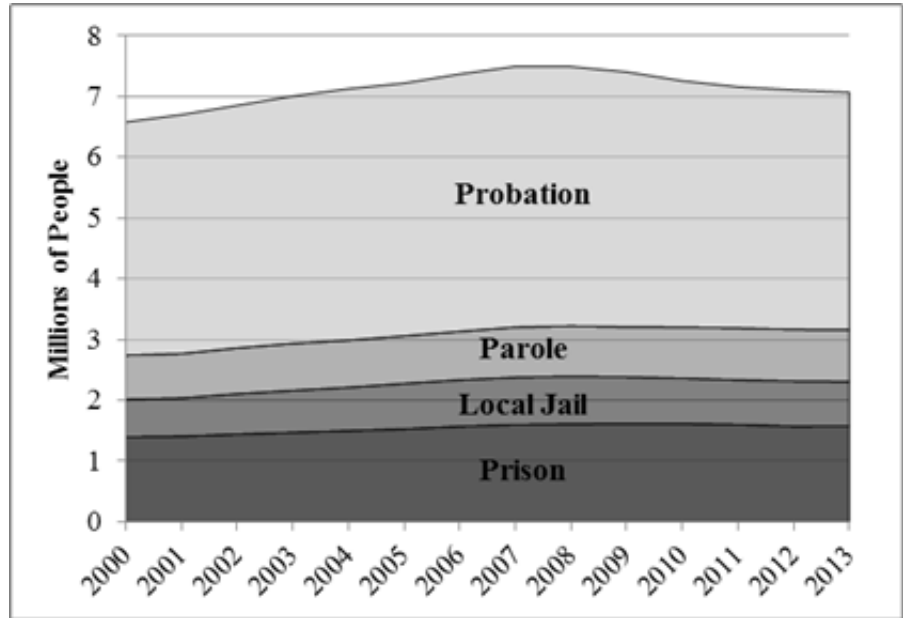


increase in the number of prisoners. Below is a pie chart that breaks down the proportion of prisoners in state & federal facilities.

2. The prison AND jail population in the U.S. declined slightly in 2013.

The decrease can be mostly attributed to a decline in the number of people in jail. The number of people in local jails last year fell by almost 2 percent – to 731,200. The US is still the world’s largest jailer by a mile.

Police violence continues unabated... and so too does the resistance.



3. This year will be remembered for the deaths of Tanisha Anderson, Mike Brown, Eric Garner, Tamir Rice, and more.

It will also be remembered for the sustained resistance to police violence catalyzed by protests in Ferguson, Missouri.

4. A group of 8 young people of color from Chicago took their charge of genocide to the United Nations Committee Against Torture to internationalize the struggle against police violence.

This was the year that the school-to-prison pipeline went mainstream as a concept.

5. The Federal government acknowledged the existence of a school to prison pipeline and for the first time ever offered official guidance to school districts for how to address it.

Data from the 2011-2012 Civil Rights Data Collection show that Black students make up 44 percent of students suspended more than once and 36 percent of students expelled, though they represent only 16 percent of students. In addition, Black students represent 27 percent of students referred by schools to law enforcement, and 31 percent of students arrested for an offense committed in school. The Federal guidance is intended to address racial discrimination in school discipline policy.

It’s hard to believe that we needed to pass legislation banning sterilization of prisoners in 2014 but we did.

6. On September 25, Governor Jerry Brown signed SB 1135, an anti-sterilization bill championed by Justice NOW. Justice NOW provided some background about illegal sterilizations in California prisons:

“The discovery that upwards of 100 illegal sterilizations of pregnant people imprisoned at Valley State Prison for Women and California Institution for Women between 2006-2010 spurred lawmakers into action. A report by the Center for Investigative Reporting released last year revealed that at least 250 such sterilizations may have occurred since the late 1990s; a story based on years of research, documentation and advocacy by Justice Now in collaboration with people in California women’s prisons. A state audit released in May of this year confirmed that the tubal ligations performed between 2006-2010 in some cases were done illegally not meeting legal requirements for informed consent and that prison is such a coercive environment that the ability to give consent could not be established therefor tubal ligations should not be performed.”

Everyone says that they want to end the so-called war on drugs. This year, the DOJ and Congress gave a few nods in the direction of sentencing reform.

7. The US Sentencing Commission voted to retroactively apply an amendment they approved earlier this year that lowers federal guidelines for sentencing persons convicted of drug trafficking offenses. As Anthony Papa explains:

“The underlying drug guidelines amendment was approved by the U.S. Sentencing Commission and submitted to Congress for review in April. Provided Congress takes no action to disapprove of the drug guidelines amendment before November 1, 2014, it will take effect on that date and courts may then begin considering petitions from incarcerated individuals for sentence reductions. Today’s vote allows the drug guidelines amendment to apply retroactively. The U.S. Sentencing Commission ruled that no one who benefits from this reform may be released from prison before November 1, 2015.”

Unfortunately, in 2014, there was still no justice for women who defend themselves from violence.

8. Marissa Alexander accepted a plea deal. By pleading guilty to three felony charges, Marissa was ordered to serve three years in jail. With time served, she is set to be released on January 27 when she will have another hearing to determine whether she will have to serve more prison time as part of an open plea. She will have to serve two years under house arrest for sure.

Read the statement by the Free Marissa NOW mobilization campaign for more information.

In 2014, we continued to torture incarcerated children.

9. The Federal government (Department of Justice) announces that it will sue over the terrible conditions for adolescent detainees at Rikers Island Jail.

Specifically, the Complaint alleges:

* Staff use force against Young Inmates with alarming frequency. In Fiscal Year 2014, there were 553 reported staff use of force incidents involving Young Inmates at the Robert D. Davoren Center (“RNDC”) and the Eric M. Taylor Center (“EMTC”), the two facilities that housed most Young Inmates. These incidents resulted in 1,088 injuries.

* Inmate-on-inmate fights and assaults are pervasive in large part because inmates are inadequately supervised by inexperienced and poorly trained officers. In Fiscal Year 2014, there were 657 reported inmate-on-inmate fights

- involving Young Inmates at RNDC and EMTC.
- * Staff use of force and inmate-on-inmate fights and assaults have resulted in an alarming number of serious injuries to Young Inmates, including broken jaws, broken orbital bones, broken noses, long bone fractures, and lacerations requiring stitches.
 - * Staff frequently punch, strike, or kick Young Inmates in the head or facial area.
 - * Force is used as a means to punish Young Inmates, and staff unnecessarily continue to use force against inmates who already have been restrained.
 - * Force is used in response to inmate verbal taunts and insults.
 - * Specialized response teams, including probe and cell extraction teams, use excessive force.
 - * Staff regularly tell inmates to “stop resisting,” even though the inmate has been completely subdued, to justify the use of force.
 - * Use of excessive force is common in areas outside video surveillance coverage. DOC recently transferred many 18-year-old inmates to housing units that have no video surveillance at all.

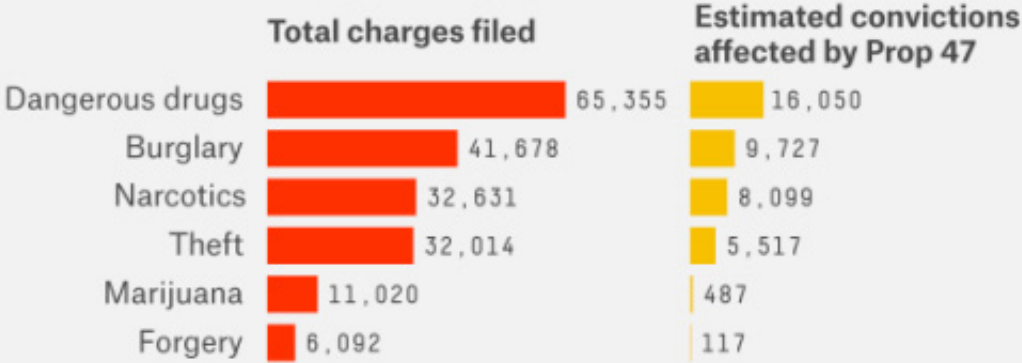
In some states, local activists used the ballot box as a tool for decarceration.

10. Proposition 47 “The Safe Neighborhoods and Schools Act” passed in California. The proposition reclassifies drug and theft crimes that involve less than \$950 from felonies to misdemeanors. Below are some estimates of how the proposition might impact incarceration in California. More details on potential effects are here.

In 2014, the Prison Industrial Complex was STILL racist.

How Proposition 47 Will Affect California’s Prison Population

Number of relevant charges filed in 2012



FIVETHIRTYEIGHT

SOURCE: CENTER ON JUVENILE AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE

11. People of color are even more overrepresented in private prisons than in public ones. According to Harrison Jacobs:

“While minorities are disproportionately incarcerated in all prisons in America — The Sentencing Project, a reform advocacy group, puts the number for racial and ethnic minorities as high as 60% of those imprisoned — the percentage of minorities in private prisons is often higher than 60% in some states’ private prisons and reaches 89% in California’s private prisons, according to the study recently published in the Journal of Radical Criminology by UC Berkeley doctoral candidate Christopher Petrella.

Said Petrella: “I came to find out that through explicitly and implicitly exemptions written into contracts between these private prison management companies and state departments of correction, many of these privates ... write exemptions for certain types of prisoners into their contracts ... And, as you can guess, the prisoners they like to house are low-cost prisoners ... Those prisoners tend to be younger, and they tend to be much healthier.”

Based on historical sentencing patterns, says Petrella, prisoners over 50 years old are predominantly white. Those prisoners who are in the 20-40 year-old range are far more likely to be black, Hispanic, or any other minority.

The difference in prison demographics stems from The War on Drugs, which has been criticized as targeting minority communities and imposing draconian mandatory minimum sentences.”

Old myths were debunked but maintain their power to oppress.

12. Twenty years later, the so-called superpredator wave is debunked as myth.

“In 1995, John DiIulio, a professor at Princeton who coined the term “superpredator,” predicted that the number of juveniles in custody would increase three-fold in the coming years and that, by 2010, there would be “an estimated 270,000 more young predators on the streets than in 1990.” Criminologist James Fox joined in the rhetoric, saying publicly, “Unless we act today, we’re going to have a bloodbath when these kids grow up.”

These predictions set off a panic, fueled by highly publicized heinous crimes committed by juvenile offenders, which led nearly every state to pass legislation

between 1992 and 1999 that dramatically increased the treatment of juveniles as adults for purposes of sentencing and punishment.

As Dilulio and Fox themselves later admitted, the prediction of a juvenile superpredator epidemic turned out to be wrong. In fact, violent juvenile crime rates had already started to fall in the mid-1990’s. By 2000, the juvenile homicide rate stabilized below the 1985 level.”

We continue to torture people with impunity.

13. The long-awaited CIA torture report was released and it was as horrific as feared. From the New York Times:

“The report describes extensive waterboarding as a “series of near drownings” and suggests that more prisoners were subjected to waterboarding than the three prisoners the C.I.A. has acknowledged in the past. The report also describes detainees being subjected to sleep deprivation for up to a week, medically unnecessary “rectal feeding” and death threats. Conditions at one prison, described by a clandestine officer as a “dungeon,” were blamed for the death of a detainee, and the harsh techniques were described as leading to “psychological and behavioral issues, including hallucinations, paranoia, insomnia, and attempts at self-harm and self-mutilation.”

By Mariame Kaba originally published on *Prison Culture* 21 December 2014

NINE LGBTQ STORIES BIG MEDIA IGNORED IN 2014

Radical queer organizing was alive and well in the US in 2014; you just may not have heard about it in mainstream media.

The mainstream “Homosexual Agenda” in 2014 revolved around conservative issues like gay marriage and transgender military inclusion. That meant lots of important queer and trans stories didn’t get much of a voice.

Buzz about the criminalization of trans sex workers and the horror stories of undocumented queer people in immigration detention centers may have been muted by the Big Media gatekeepers, but these issues deserve a wider audience. Here are nine stories that will no doubt reverberate in 2015:

1. CeCe McDonald is free! Back in 2011, the black trans woman from Minnesota was imprisoned for defending herself against a transphobic white man with a swastika tattoo. Just days after getting out last January, she began a tour of the country to bring her message of prison abolition to the masses. She has also been spreading the word about the disappearance of Sage Smith, another black trans woman who has been missing from her home in Charlottesville, Virginia, for more than two years. Smith’s family reports that local police have offered no help; meanwhile, Charlottesville cops left no stone unturned in the search for a cisgender, white woman in another missing person case that made national news.
2. “Walking While Trans” is still a crime. “Manifesting Prostitution” was the official charge that got black, trans, social work student Monica Jones sentenced to 30 days in jail, but the high rate at which police stop trans women for no apparent reason continues. While Jones appeals the court’s decision, she organizes with Phoenix’s Sex Workers Outreach Group to promote safety for sex workers and fight their criminalization. A recent success: Jones reports that the sex worker profiling group that helped get her convicted, Project ROSE, has no events planned and “will not be conducting any more police stings.”
3. Obama’s war on whistleblowers continued to target trans Wikileaks source Chelsea Manning. After being denied clemency in April, Manning and the ACLU filed a lawsuit against Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel in September. In the suit, the former Army private, who is currently serving a 35-year sentence in a Kansas federal prison, says she has been denied access to medically necessary treatment related to her gender identity.
4. They’re here, they’re undocuqueer, get used to it. In 2014, groups such as Familia (Southern California) and Southerners On New Ground (SONG) risked arrest and in some cases deportation as they demanded #Not1More deportation and an end to the criminalization of LGBTQ immigrants. Familia protested outside the LGBT pod at the ICE detention center in Santa Ana, California, while SONG staged a seven-hour sit-in at a LGBT Congressional Caucus meeting, leaving only after gay and lesbian congress people promised they’d bring specific protections for queer immigrants to President Obama’s attention.

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...Cont from Page 7... Then, in late December, about 115 LGBTQ and immigration organizations officially got behind the call to release altogether trans people from ICE detention centers, where, according to immigration attorney Olga Tomchin, the department has “shown over and over that they are incapable of detaining transgender people with even minimal levels of



Laverne Cox and CeCe McDonald. (Photo: Sabelo Narasimhan / The Opportunity Agenda)

dignity and safety . . . The only solution is to release [them].”

5. TIME magazine dubbed 2014 the “Trans Tipping Point” with a May cover story, but for most trans women of color, reported violence is on the rise. The Transgender Violence Tracking Portal, which records incidents of murders, violence, missing persons and harassment against transgender people, found that a transgender person is reported murdered every 38 hours. The murders of Filipina Jennifer Laude by US Army Private Joseph Pemberton in October and Deshawnda Sanchez, who was gunned down as she sought help at a stranger’s home in Los Angeles on December 3, made the press, but countless others never made the headlines.

6. Queer activists were left bloodied and jailed at an anti-prison march on the anniversary of the Stonewall uprising. Coinciding with the country’s largest gay gathering, San Francisco Pride, three protesters with the radical action group Gay Shame were arrested blocks away from a prison-themed circuit party. SF Pride and the porn company responsible for the party, Kink.com, refused calls to cancel the for-profit event, which promised “solitary confinement, showers, jailbreak, love and lust, freedom and confinement.” Prison abolition group Critical Resistance, community grand marshal Miss Major and her Transgender, Gender Variant, and Intersex Justice Project, and trans author and SF Pride celebrity grand marshal Janet Mock, among others, signed a letter explaining why they opposed the so-called “Prison of Love”:

At a time when public discussion and media finally has an eye toward the daily systemic violence against trans and queer people, this party theme and promotions are especially harmful and trivializing. As the June 28 party (arranged in conjunction with a sister event in Israel) raged, so did a protest of several hundred queers who took over several blocks of the city’s Mission District. “Trans women and gender nonconforming people of color are kidnapped, tortured, brutalized and murdered by the prison industrial complex,” Gay Shame wrote in a statement, calling the party “a cash-making joke.” Accompanying banners, pins and a chant declared the marchers “Pro-Sex / Anti-Prison / Queers for Abolition.” The activists were released several days later, with help from the National Lawyers Guild and a campaign to “Free the Gay Shame 3.”

7. Three queer women of color (Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi) helped spark the fire against anti-black violence and police brutality. Created in response to the murder of Trayvon Martin, the #BlackLivesMatter movement picked up momentum after racist decisions in the cases of Marissa Alexander, Michael Brown, Eric Garner and Tamir Rice. Garza laid out the inspiration for the campaign in her recent statement:

When we are able to end hyper-criminalization and sexualization of Black people and end the poverty, control and surveillance of Black people, every single person in this world has a better shot at getting and staying free. When Black people get free, everybody gets free. This is why we call on Black people and our allies to take up the call that Black lives matter.

8. “Remember me as a revolutionary communist.” Those were the last words of transgender author and lifelong freedom fighter Leslie Feinberg, who wrote the beloved trans novel Stone Butch Blues, fought for Palestinian liberation, and campaigned vigilantly for CeCe McDonald (including tagging the county jail where McDonald was held), to name just a few of the causes she supported. Feinberg passed away on November 15. Rest in power, Leslie!

9. Reading is fundamental. Some 2,000 packages of books made it into the hands of LGBTQ people behind bars, where they’re overrepresented as compared to straight people. More are on the way, thanks to Madison, Wisconsin-based LGBT Books to Prisoners. The org also announced a partnership with trans advocate Janet Mock, who began publicizing the #TransBookDrive campaign to much fanfare on Twitter on November 30; the campaign continues through the end of the year.

By Toshio Meronek originally published on Truthout 31 December 2014

THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS PRISON REFORM: AN INTERVIEW WITH CECE MCDONALD

One year ago today, CeCe McDonald was released from prison. Her crime? Self-defense against a racist, transphobic attack in which she was glassed through the cheek, resulting in a lacerated salivary gland that required 11 stitches.



CeCe McDonald: self-defense led to prison. Credit: supportcece.wordpress.com.

CeCe’s story gained international attention. People widely saw it as the persecution of a trans woman of color: sent to prison for defending herself against a hate crime. “Free CeCe” became a cause célèbre, with 18,000 people signing a petition demanding her release, and trans actress Laverne Cox using CeCe as inspiration for her character in Orange is the New Black.

As 23-year-old CeCe and four friends left Minnesota’s Schooner Tavern on June 5, 2011, a cluster of white people outside began to shout slurs, using “chicks with dicks”, “faggots” and “niggers” against the African-American and largely LGBTQ group. A fight ensued, during which swastika-tattooed attacker Dean Schmitz was stabbed with a pair of scissors. CeCe was the only person arrested.

Facing a possible 40 year sentence for murder, she accepted a plea bargain, and eventually served 19 months. During her time in prison, she was held in two men’s facilities.

But you can’t talk about CeCe McDonald without also talking about Michael Brown and Eric Garner, about Rekia Boyd and Yvette Smith, about the way in which the state and the police systematically target, imprison, and kill of people of color. Less than a year later George Zimmerman was acquitted, on grounds of self defense, for the murder of Trayvon Martin, giving rise to the #blacklivesmatter movement.

State violence and the threat of the prison industrial complex (PIC) lives in the bodies of queer and trans people of color from their first breath, prior to any organized resistance.

California prison abolition group Critical Resistance brought CeCe to the Bay Area earlier this fall. I interviewed her on prison abolition strategies, the importance of creative community on the inside, and how to fight back against systemic oppression.

AK: What kinds of things do you want to see come out of the prison abolition movement?

CM: In order for us to talk about the abolition of prisons we have to talk about how to prevent people from getting in prisons. How do we change things around current policies and people being in prison? It’s not so much to think about the crimes and how to prevent them—the reality is that not all crimes are preventable.

We are going to have people who are ignorant. We are going to have people who still are filled with hate. With that we know that cases of hate crimes and violence against women and trans women, violence against the LGBTQIA community, and crimes against people of color are going to still exist.

Crime is still going to exist, so how do we talk about abolition and not talk about the reality that hate exists? We have to acknowledge that, and figure out how to navigate that there are some people that aren’t easy to convince that: I’m a good person as a black person or I’m a good person as a trans person. We have to understand that. Then maybe we can talk about the realities of what justice could look like.

AK: Can you talk more about the prison abolition movement compared to prison reform work?

CM: I feel like true reform would be the actual ending of prison: dismantling the prison system. There is no such thing as saying we can fix it and end it. We can only have it one or the other way.

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The word ‘reform’ needs to reshape itself. We don’t want to make prison different, we want to make it end. In my opinion there is no such thing as reform.

AK: I would like to hear some of your thoughts on community accountability processes or transformative justice as an alternative to the prison industrial complex.

CM: Transformative justice is a very complex and touchy subject, as we all know. Some people's idea of transformative justice is true and fair but we know that the system is not set up to be true and fair, and that it is made to break down marginalized groups, to 'divide and conquer'.

So, for me, transformative justice is non-essential, something that is created to give people hope that there is a fairness or could be fairness in the justice system. It's not possible. Transformative justice is to contradict prison abolition in a sense.

AK: You talked about people being passive players in this framework of (resisting) capitalism, racism, and all the terrible things. What are your suggestions on how people can not play that game?

CM: I feel like a lot of times people don't speak up. To not be so passive about things is to speak out and educate yourself on these things and know what the reality is, what the truth is, assimilate that with your privilege and make shit

happen!

For me, I feel like it's really important because a lot of times people claim to be an ally or an activist but you can't be passive and be both. You can't be an activist and sit back on the sidelines and be like: "Oh, I made some cookies to raise money for a cause." The reality is baking cookies isn't going to help the cause and act of having a voice, standing up for people. I can't be in a space with a bunch of people who think having a potluck is real activist work. We need to have a movement and be real about it.

People who have privilege can make some really big changes, you know what I'm saying? I want to see how many rich white people can call out their other rich white friends when they say something wrong. And that's being a true ally. That's being a true activist. It don't have to just be you with a picket sign marching down the street. That's cool too but what about the domestic shit? What about the shit that's right next to me? That's what counts more than being passive and saying that you're an activist.

AK: What is your relationship to creative work? What possibilities for creativity are there inside prison?

CM: I've seen such talent within the prison that I was at, and also watching shows about different people in prison across the country I know that a lot wrote poetry, drew pictures, very detailed, wonderful pictures, sung songs, made-up raps, and stuff like that, about the PIC or being locked up, or being caught up in the system. It was natural to who they were as individuals, because of the diversity that's in the PIC.

People come from so many different backgrounds and we use that as a tool in our arts: the way that we write our poetry, the way that we write our music, the way that we draw our pictures. A lot of the stuff that I wrote on the blog when I

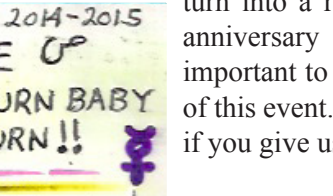
Cont on Page 10...

The creators of On the Inside are incredibly grateful to the many artists (3881) who submitted their drawings, paintings and cards to be considered for the upcoming Exhibit! Hundreds of unique pieces, each expressing the artists' passion, perspective, and talent, were reviewed by the On the Insider curators. Unfortunately, not all pieces were able to be accepted. Given the significant volume of submissions, the On the Inside administrators are a little backed up with replying to everyone. Rest assured that all artwork that was received was logged into the database, along with artists' preference for compensation and how to handle declined artwork. Artist compensation was made a priority along with returning artwork. Everyone will receive a thorough response for the On the Inside team as the administrators work hard to catch up! Please see a sample of some of the incredible pieces that were accepted for final exhibit curation throughout the newspaper! Pictured here is work by *Ferguson to Palestine* by Rayfield J.



available Sundays 1-5pm (Eastern Time) for certain. You can call at other times as well and we will do our best to answer your calls.

The purpose of the hotline is for 3 primary things:

- 
1. Story telling. We are trying to collect stories of incarcerated members to turn into a recording that we can play at our 10 year anniversary celebration in October. Your voices are important to us and we want to make sure they are part of this event. We want to make time to record your story if you give us permission.
 2. Supportive listening. Being in prison is lonely, as we all know. The hotline is here for supportive listening so you can just talk to someone about what is going on in your life.
 3. Organizing. If there are things going on at your prison in terms of lock downs, guard harassment, resistance, and anything else that should be shared with the public, let us know so we can spread the word.

Restrictions:

The hotline is not a number to call about getting on the pen pal list or to get the newspaper.

The hotline is not a number to call for sexual or erotic chatting.

The hotline is not a number for getting help with your current court case, we are not legal experts.

We look forward to hearing from you! This is our first attempt at this so please be patient with us as we work it all out. We will not be able to answer every call, but we will do our best.

After over a year of thinking about how to make this happen we are now announcing that people can call us. The phone number is **617.519.4387**. Your calls will be answered as often as possible. We are not currently able to set up accounts, so calls must be either pre-paid or collect. The hotline will be

BLACK & PINK INCARCERATED FAMILY FEEDBACK! MAIL TO: Black & Pink - FEEDBACK Dorchester, MA 02125
-----rip slip here-----

As we aim for more transparency regarding composing the newspaper, we would like to share our newspaper editing guidelines with you. We invite you to give us feedback on the editing guidelines that are currently in place. Please review the guidelines on Page 2 and share your thoughts with us. How do you feel about them? Is there anything you would like to see added or changed?

...Cont from Page 9... was locked-up came from and was inspired by the way I grew up, my intellect and my background, being in school, loving education. It came out in a way that was really self-expressive, showing people who I was as an individual.

It made me feel like people were understanding who I was, not just one other person in the system, but that I was one other person with dreams and aspirations. I had this on my mind.

I went to write and it came out on paper, and the way people connected to me was through my blog, seeing my perspective as an individual in prison.

AK: You talked about having a positive relationship with your Parole Officer. How does that relationship work compared to interactions with Corrections staff?

CM: We have to understand people have predispositions. Occupations attract people who have internalized issues. So a person who is racist or sexist or classist or ageist or any of these things...they’re going to work in places that you go to on a day-to-day basis whether it be the post office, McDonalds, or the prisons.

The things that come along with being a prison guard: it’s people who feel like it’s their duty to put people of color in check and in line, you know what I’m saying? It’s icky that they work for the prison industrial complex, yes, you know what I’m saying? That exists. Those people exist and have jobs and those jobs are the places that we go to on a day-to-day basis.

But not all of them are bad. But we also got to expect that some are going to have a predisposition about you, whether it’s because you’re a woman, whether they don’t like you because you’re black or a person of color, when they they’re not going to like you because you’re queer or you’re trans or gender non-conforming.

AK: Is there anything else you would like to say?

CM: I just want people to start realizing the world that we live in. I want people to open their minds and their hearts to the things that are going on across the world. With the advances of social media we see it every day: police brutality, racism, war crimes, hunger, poverty. So much that we sit back and say, “Oh well, that’s bad,” and then go about our daily lives, to the nearest Starbucks and forget all about that.

I’m still going through issues with my incident, learning to trust people. I know there are people out there who are good, that want change, that expect love and empathy and sympathy. We need more people like that. We need to stop raising our younger generation to this idea of what hate is and it’s really hard. I know that it’s possible.

I’m really looking forward to being more diligent and steadfast in my advocacy work and bringing together different groups of people from different backgrounds. We need to open our minds and hearts to these changes to see what justice is, fear, and equality. We have to be the people who want change and move upon that, to end the ‘-isms’.

It hinders us as human beings. It prevents us from progressing. That’s what the system wants. They don’t want us to progress, to realize our true potential as human beings who can come together aside from all those -isms, and just be human beings.

By Andrea Abi-Karam originally published on Open Democracy 13 January 2015

FOR SOLITARY CONFINEMENT IN U.S. PRISONS, A YEAR OF INCREMENTAL REFORM

As the year ended, The Marshall Project provided a comprehensive roundup of reforms to solitary confinement practices across the country. Eli Hager and Gerald Rich write: “In 2014 one of the most controversial practices in criminal justice, solitary confinement, faced unprecedented challenges. As a result of

legislation or lawsuits, ten states adopted 14 measures aimed at curtailing the use of solitary, abolishing solitary for juveniles or the mentally ill, improving conditions in segregated units, or gradually easing isolated inmates back into the general population.” The article goes on to describe each of the measures adopted in 2014, and in several previous years.

Reform is not synonymous with abolition, and the forms it takes are almost always incremental. These changes have, or will, improve the day-to-day lives of perhaps several thousand individuals who have been suffering in solitary. The reforms stand as a tribute to the thousands of activists and advocates—including many currently or formerly held in solitary confinement themselves—who have worked to bring this domestic human rights crisis to the attention of the nation after it had languished in the shadows for decades.

Still, it’s worth noting that this “Shifting Away from Solitary” has not been a seismic shift, and to date has affected only a small number of the more than 80,000 individuals who, according to the best available data, are in isolation in the nation’s prisons on any given day.

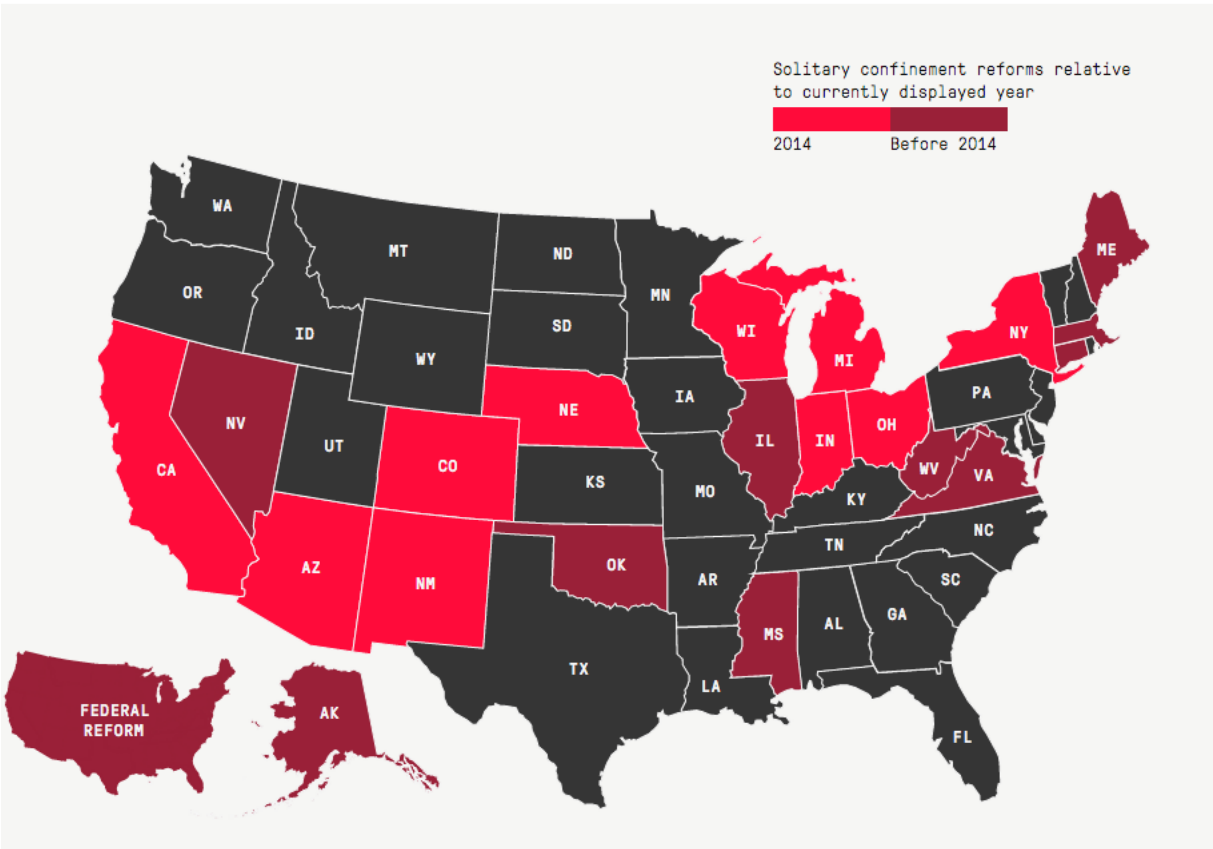
For example, in California—which is second only to the federal prison system in the use of solitary confinement—about 6,000 people are in solitary confinement, with thousands more locked down in double cells. Of these, 400 have qualified for a pilot program to transition them back to the general prison population, and 150 have actually made the transition.

In many other states, the focus has been on children under the age of 18 in adult prisons, or people with mental illness. These are both highly vulnerable groups, and the latter is in many states quite a large group as well, and their removal from solitary is significant. It also demands some scrutiny, since many are being moved to new special units with problems of their own.

All such reforms also risk dividing the incarcerated into two groups—those who “deserve” to be in solitary confinement, and those who do not. For advocates who believe that solitary is a form of torture, and therefore not acceptable for anyone, the road ahead remains a long one. So, too, for opponents who object to solitary as a “sentence within a sentence,” handed down by prison officials without due process of law—since these same prison officials are usually involved in initiating, negotiating, or formulating the reforms.

Despite such reservations, there is ample change to fortify enemies of solitary for the struggle ahead. For decades, the use of solitary confinement grew with a virtually complete absence of attention from the media, policy makers, and even major activist groups. It depended upon its own invisibility to sustain itself. To penetrate the walls of secrecy and ignorance surrounding solitary confinement is only a first step—but it is one that can never be undone.

By Jean Casella and James Ridgeway originally published on *Soliday Watch* 7 January 2015



PRISONS ARE DESTROYING COMMUNITIES AND MAKING ALL OF US LESS SAFE

“Shit, shit, shit, shit, shit!” I’m crying with my mother over the phone. It’s late evening, December 25, 2012, and Kayla, my only sister and best friend, has been arrested for the seventh time in the past six years. She’s in jail again—and this time, we’re sort of hoping she’ll stay there. “If she asks,” I tell Mom, “I’m not bailing her out.”

Cont on Page 12...

That Smile

Hiding secrets of nights gone wild
Those lips that beg for my kiss -
I'd love to taste that smile
with my wanton tongue
Hunggrily devouring sum
with the promise
of more fun to cum.
Those lips caress
these lines of tattooed ink upon my chest
while on their way down
& oh! oh! oh! The sound
they make as they kiss
& nip
at my skin
It's the sound of sin
I'm drunk off this gin that is HIM!
That smile (!)
The devil's own sweet grin
Could not even begin
to contend
with that smile on HIM!

Charlemagne, Texas



One Love by Gary W.

“Your Canvas”

I want to take you some place that nobody knows
Lock all the doors and remove all our clothes
Rub paint on your fingers, your elbows and nose
Cover your legs, your ankles and toes
I would then dim the lights ever so faintly
Unroll the canvas of my life so you could repaint me
I'd have you do as you wished without question or fear
Creating new colors in a mixture of laughter and tear
For they say that love is gentle, love is patient and kind
Coming natural for some, others are mysteriously blind
So make me your artwork if you'd be so inclined
Just promise to stay and paint all that you find
When you are finished I will draw you a bath
And pose in your favor to look and laugh
I could stare at the signature on the work you'd begun
And in memory of us, will think of nothing more fun.

James Dean

“Captive Gender”

I get strange looks
Like “What’s wrong with that guy?”
You see a guy, but I tell it’s a lie.
There’s more for you to see
Like the person trapped inside of me,
Just beggin’ to break free
I’m not a ‘ho’ or a ‘punk’
Or some stupid prison junk
I’m just a lady, with class
Not a person to harass, or grab their ass
I’ve got feelings and thoughts that are complex
No I don’t wanna blow you, or have prison sex.
Just because I show you my true self
Doesn’t mean you can talk to me that way.
(Like I was born yesterday)
I love that we’re not the same
You, me, we all got pain
But when you start hatin’
It’s kinda lame; and I won’t play your game.
So just keep it real, show me how you feel
I’ll tell you what; let’s make a deal
Let’s learn from others; Love each other
Like sisters and brothers.
Let’s give it a try, it feels great not to lie;
Or have to cry, without even knowin’ why.

Author Unknown (if you now who wrote this, please let us know.)

Fair Warning

All you know me, some of you I’ve met
You’ve all heard the warning but none have listened yet.
I’m no well-kept secret, I’m known throughout the world
To every race of men, women, boys, and girls.
I’m bad for your health, will kill you slow,
You can try to run, but there’s nowhere to go.

There’s no help; the only thing I AID in is your death,
Creeping like a ninja to steal your last breath.
I’m the gift that can’t be given back but far from a treasure,
Making a victim of your passion and casualty of your pleasure.
I come with a big butt and a smile
But look deeper and you’ll see the deception and guile.

I’m long and strong or wet and tight between divided thighs
I look good, I feel good, I taste good; pleasure personified.

Indulge in your passions, and I’ll indulge in mine
Working slowly to destroy your body and mind.
I suggest you stay strapped if you plan to keep me away
For once I come, there’s no hope of escape.
You’ve been warned, so take heed if you know what’s best
‘Cause slowly but surely I’m coming, and you could be next.

Nawty Boy
Be Patient

Why do I got to be confined to this cold cell?
Losing you has been a living hell
Hearing you call another man baby
Plays tricks on my mind, driving me crazy.

We had such beautiful plans
A little problem and you turn your back and ran.
You know that fool you with now don’t love you

When he knows all of you he’s only gonna hurt you by judging you

What’s it gonna take?
Me getting down on my knees begging Please!
Please! Don’t go.

As I’m down on my knees, I ain’t begging
I’m praying to our Father in Heaven.

He makes me see that you aren’t the one for me
Telling me to be patient and I’ll see
That there’s a perfect man out there meant for me.

I hope it’s soon because I’m lonely and sad sitting in this cold room.

Angry Eyes



Unique by Robert O.

Attack

Who I am is not enough so they decapitate my character as if my life isn’t tough. I have all the good characteristics yet my personality is too strong, like I’m a rabid animal and on its jaw I remain the foam; contaminated with a virus from the inner organs that has spilled out. I know this is your perception of me I have no doubt. I have only 2 friends, and the rest are foes. But my intolerance of their minute words as they crawl from their burrows,
To antagonize me about the knowledge of the sun, how so be it they squint their eyes at the UV rays; they know nothing, realizing the truth of this is somewhat fun.

I have become bored with their attention, on to the next, reality is here within my context. Everything about this is very severe, if they don’t like the truth continue to ignore His word and listen to my words, the words I utter are to be discerned and revered.

To: Mother Earth’s inhabitants
Love,
Tatiana Daniels

...Cont from Page 10... “Well, you know we’re not,” Mom says, her voice low and far away, a weary echo of words uttered in months and years past. “If she’s in there, at least she’ll be safe.”

Jail, we agree, may be the only place that can save Kayla’s life, staving off her burning dependency on heroin. Neither of us acknowledges that regardless of whether Kayla stays clean while incarcerated, sooner or later she’ll be getting out.

“Do we know what she’s in for?” I ask Mom.
“Does it matter?”

I think of Kayla, cuffed and listless, being dragged through the doors of the Cook County Jail, catching the eyes of women she’s known before—in court, on the street, in juvenile detention, in jail, in prison. I wonder whether a part of her is relieved to be back.

Later, when I pick up the phone and hear a robotic voice announce, “You have a collect call from the Cook County Jail: press five to take the call,” I press the hang-up button and get into bed.

The Hole

My attitude toward Kayla’s incarceration was born out of desperation. She had overdosed three times within two months, passing out on the street, awakening in abandoned buildings or crowded hospitals, her pulse barely ticking. Yet my wish chafed against not only my love for her, but also my politics, my ideals, my sense of justice and truth. After all, I run a social justice-based news organization and have denounced the colossus that is the prison-industrial complex for as long as I can remember. For nearly a decade, I’ve corresponded with a number of people in prison, as both interviewees and pen pals, and I’ve learned much from them about the violence and hopelessness of the system. My understandings of the power structures that create prisons have been guided by the work of people like activist and scholar Angela Davis, a staunch prison abolitionist. How could I reconcile my wholehearted opposition to the prison-industrial complex with a desire to see my own sister locked up?

When I look back on that time, I can only comprehend it by acknowledging the insidious, persistent role that prison occupied in my mind. It was closely connected to the role it occupies in larger society: Incarceration serves as the default answer to many of the worst social problems plaguing this country—not because it solves them, but because it buries them. By isolating and disappearing millions of Americans (more than 2.3 million, making us the most incarcerated nation on the planet), prison conveniently disappears deeply rooted issues that society—or rather, those with power in society—would rather not attend to.

“Prison,” writes Angela Davis, “performs a feat of magic.” As massive numbers of homeless, hungry, unemployed, drug-addicted, illiterate, and mentally ill people vanish behind its walls, the social problems of extreme poverty, homelessness, hunger, unemployment, drug addiction, illiteracy, and mental illness become more ignorable, too. But, as Davis notes, “prisons do not disappear problems, they disappear human beings.” And the caging and erasure of those human beings, mostly people of color and poor people, perpetuates a cycle in which large groups are cut off from “mainstream society” and denied the freedoms, opportunities, civic dignity, and basic needs that allow them a good life.

In many jails and prisons, incarcerated people are tossed into a dank, dungeon-like solitary confinement cell when they are determined to have “misbehaved.” It’s dubbed “the Hole.” Isolated and dark, it shuts out almost all communication with fellow prisoners and the outside. Guards control the terms of confinement and the channels—if any—by which words can travel in and out. The Hole presents a stark symbol of the institution of prison in its entirety, which functions on the tenets of disappearance, isolation, and

disposability. The “solution” to our social problems—the mechanism that’s supposed to “keep things together”—amounts to destruction: the disposal of vast numbers of human beings, the breaking down of families, and the shattering of communities. Prison is tearing society apart.

This country’s most marginalized communities bear the overwhelming brunt of the devastation. But ultimately we are all caught up in the destruction, as the politics of isolation ruptures the human bonds that could otherwise hold together a safer, healthier, more just society.

The behemoth that encompasses the prison is called by many names. The most meaningful ones, I think, are those that convey the pervasiveness of its power: the way it infects the world outside as well as the people within.

Scholar and activist Beth Richie uses the term “prison nation,” describing it as “a broad notion of using the arm of the law to control people, especially people who are disadvantaged and come from disadvantaged communities.” That control can take the form of prisons, jails, surveillance, policing, detention, probation, harsh restrictions on child guardianship, the militarization of schools, and other strategies of isolation and disposal particularly deployed against poor communities of color, especially black communities.

Others have used “prison nation” simply to demonstrate the system’s vastness—how it infiltrates our culture and fuels our national politics, often in invisible ways. “Prison-industrial complex” (PIC) is another key term; Rachel Herzing of the prison abolitionist group Critical Resistance defines it as “the symbiotic relationship between public and private interests that employ imprisonment, policing, surveillance, the courts, and their attendant cultural apparatuses as a means of maintaining social, economic, and political inequities.” The concept emphasizes how financial and political powers use prison and punishment to maintain oppression, making it look natural and necessary. Prison doesn’t stop at the barbed wire fence, and it doesn’t end on a release date.

Ninety-five percent of prisoners are released. They’re emerging from their isolation poorer and more alienated than when they went in. They’re coming out with fewer economic opportunities and fewer human connections on the outside. Some come home to find that “home” no longer exists. Many, like Kayla, fall into harmful patterns, sometimes in order to survive, sometimes because they feel they have nothing much to live for. Others are reincarcerated for the flimsiest of reasons as “parole violators,” especially if they’re black or brown or Native or gender-nonconforming or poor. More than 40 percent of those released return to prison within three years.

Isolation

does not
“rehabilitate”
people.
Disappearance
does not deter
harm. And
prison does not
keep us safe.

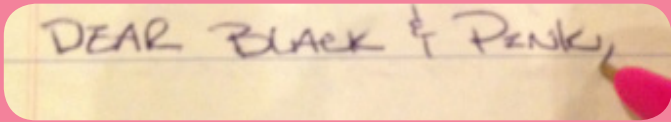
The
preceeding is
an excerpt from
the introduction
to the book
*Locked Down,
Locked Out:
Why Prison*

Doesn’t Work and How We Can Do Better, by Maya Schenwar. Published on *The Nation*

February 2015						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14 Valentine's Day
15	16 Presidents' Day	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28

ADDRESSES: PLEASE NOTE OUR NEW ADDRESSES FOR MAIL!

Please Note: You can send multiple requests/topics in one envelope! Due to concerns about consent and confidentiality, you cannot sign up other people for the newspaper. However, we can accept requests from multiple people in the same envelope. There’s no need to send separate requests in more than one envelope. If you are being released and would still like to receive a copy of the newspaper, please let us know the address we can send the newspaper to!

	Black & Pink - _____ 614 Columbia Rd Dorchester, MA 02125
If you would like to request:	Please write one or more of these topics in the top line of the address:
Newspaper Subscriptions, Pen-Pal Program, Address Change, Request Erotica, Religious Support & Volunteering (Send thank you cards to donors, etc.)	Black & Pink - General
Newspaper Submissions- Stories, Articles, Poems &Art	Black & Pink - Newspaper Submissions
Black & Pink Organization Feedback-- Especially the Slip on Page 9	Black & Pink - Feedback
Advocacy Requests- Include details about situation and thoughts about how calls or letters might help	Black & Pink - Advocacy
Submit to Erotica Zine	Black & Pink - HOT PINK
Stop Your Newspaper Subscription Black and Pink Hotline Number	Black & Pink – STOP Subscription 617.519.4387

Pen Pal Program: LGBTQ prisoners can list their information and short non-sexual ad on the internet where free world people can see it and decide to write. There will be a Pen-Pal Request Form in the Newspaper every 4 months.